yesterday, he said the Council was particularly disturbed that Serb forces had pursued aggressive military action against Gorazde simultaneously with cease-fire negotiations. He also expressed support for the actions taken by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to deal with the situation, and reminded those concerned of the consequences under Council resolutions if aggressive action continued.

The Council President expressed support for diplomatic efforts to achieve a cease-fire, citing the talks being held by the Russian Foreign Minister and the efforts of the United States Special Envoy and the European Union. He urged the leadership in Belgrade and the Bosnian Serbs to participate in those discussions in good faith with a view to settling the conflict.

The Bosnian Serbs today continued their attacks on Gorazde even though Bosnian Government resistance has collapsed, subjecting the town to indiscriminiate shelling and sniper fire. A United Nations spokesman said civilians were being targeted intentionally, and casualties were high as there was no shelter available. More than 300 people have been killed, and almost 1,100 wounded, since the latest round of fighting began on 28 March, nearly half of which were women and children.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today warned that a humanitarian catastrophe was unfolding by the hour in Gorazde, saying that every one of the 65,000 people in the town was in great danger. "The shelling of civilians in Gorazde must stop immediately," said High Commissioner Sadako Ogata. "The shameful attacks on Gorazde are in blatant disregard of all humanitarian principles and are an affront to civilized people everywhere."

An estimated 30,000 people have recently fled to Gorazde from outlying areas, many reporting that their villages had been burned to the ground. According to the UNHCR, there is no shelter available for the refugees, as more than half of the town's buildings had been damaged or destroyed even before the latest fighting began. The agency has been unable to get an aid convoy or airdrops into Gorazde since 22 March, and it is too dangerous to distribute the limited relief supplies remaining there.

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The Commission of Experts on the former Yugoslavia has found that crimes against humanity commited in Prijedor since 1992 probably qualify as genocide. Concluding a four-day meeting in Geneva on Friday, the Commission said that appallingly high numbers of people had been raped, tortured, murdered and sexually assaulted in Prijedor. It also found that civilians had been deliberately attacked in and around Sarajevo since April 1992, and in Dubrovnik in December 1991. In addition, there had been wanton destruction in the Medak Pocket in September 1993. The Commission noted that many of the human rights violations commited in the former Yugoslavia could be prosecuted before the International Criminal Tribunal.

(more)

The Commission was established in October 1992 to report to the Secretary-General on grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia. It is due to report to him on 2 May.

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The Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Bacre Waly Ndiaye, has expressed shock at the violence in Rwanda. Thousands of civilians have been killed, particularly in Kigali, since the death of the country's President, Juvenal Habyarimana, on 6 April. Those said to be responsible include the Presidential Guard and other units of the Armed Forces, members of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) and bands of armed civilians.

The Special Rapporteur noted that many of the victims had been killed simply for being Tutsis or for having opposed the late President. Among the victims were five Government ministers, including the Prime Minister and her three children, and 20 Roman Catholic nuns and priests. He also deplored the killing of Belgian peace-keepers with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) as well as Rwandans working for international agencies in Kigali.

A United Nations spokesman today announced that the fighting was continuing in Rwanda, and that UNAMIR had been unable to arrange a cease-fire because of the difficult conditions set by the Government and RPF.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has urged all South Africans to eschew violence and to participate in the upcoming elections. In a report to the Security Council dated 14 April, he said intimidation and violence should not be allowed to prevent South Africa from becoming a non-racial, democratic and united country. He expressed particular concern about opposition to the electoral process from the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), especially in Natal/KwaZulu, and from the extreme right wing.

The Secretary-General noted that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) had experienced problems in preparing for the elections. There had been delays in deploying field staff and identifying voting sites, and in supplying critical electoral equipment. Moreover, the South African Government and its security departments had not provided all the help needed to prepare a comprehensive contingency plan for security. He added that the National Peace-Keeping Force, which was to have been 10,000 strong, would not be able to deploy more than 4,000 personnel.

However, the Secretary-General went on to say that all the United Nations observers and support staff called for in his last report had already been deployed. He pledged that with its expanded mandate to observe the elections, the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) would continue to work for peace and democracy in South Africa.

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The Security Council has demanded an immediate end to hostilities in Angola and condemned any actions which threaten the delivery of humanitarian assistance there. In a letter from its President to the Secretary-General dated 14 April, the Council expressed deep concern at the continued military offensive in that country and the resulting impact on civilians.

The Council reiterated the need for a prompt and successful conclusion to the peace talks in Lusaka between the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and said it would monitor them carefully. It said the parties should approach the remaining issues with realism and the necessary political will, and within the framework of the Peace Accords. The Council also reaffirmed its readiness to consider further action in accordance with its resolutions, depending on progress towards full implementation of the Accords.

In his report to the Council dated 31 March, the Secretary-General said the Lusaka talks had stalled on the issue of UNITA's participation in State affairs. He noted, however, that the parties had already reached agreement on 12 of the 18 points relating to national reconciliation.

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General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) will leave New York tomorrow for a seven-day official visit to Barbados. The President is one of 11 members of the Eminent Persons Group invited by the Government of Barbados to examine the concept of sustainable development of small island developing States. The Group will be meeting on 21 and 22 April, in conjunction with the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Bridgetown from 25 April to 6 May.

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A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff member was killed today when gunmen fired on a plane flying into Somalia on a cross-border feeding operation. Alhadji Kebba Sanneh, a 53-year old Gambian national, was hit by a burst of gunfire shortly after the plane touched down at an airfield near the Kenyan border. Four other people on the plane escaped unhurt.

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